

## Foundation Recipient

### *Steve Krueger*



**Steve and Deanna Krueger**

### *Steve's Story*

*Steve's story was written by his wife Deanna for the foundation.*

Steve started working full time as a mason tender at the very young age of 15 years due to a car accident which left his father seriously injured, unable to work and his family in a financial crisis. Steve worked in various general construction jobs for many years but his true passion was landscaping. He eventually went to work for Cutting Edge Landscaping as a crew leader.

In 2004 Steve was diagnosed with Scheuermann's Kyphosis disease, (A skeletal disease that usually begins in adolescence in which the vertebrae grows unevenly, resulting in wedge-shaped vertebrae and a hunched back) leading to a surgical fusion of T-1 to L-1. Unfortunately, Steve contracted a Staph infection during this surgery, resulting in additional surgery to clean out the infection and extend the fusion to L-2 due to broken hardware. This infection was treated with antibiotics for 2 years before it became necessary to remove the hardware due to a worsening of the infection. As a result of the surgery to remove the hardware, Steve developed a blood clot in his lung which went undetected for several months. Due to his unstable medical condition, it was not possible to move forward with the surgery that would stabilize his spine. Steve was unable to return to work and went on disability in 2006.

Steve's spine continued to deteriorate, fracturing 3 times at the T-10 level from 2006 to 2012. With each fracture his spine collapsed a little further, crushing his lungs. The final fracture in July of 2012 so compromised his lungs he was forced to go on oxygen full time. From July of 2012 until November of 2012 Steve often complained of his legs

feeling numb and heavy. In November of 2012, Steve was diagnosed as having a Spinal Cord Injury. The last fracture had actually collapsed onto his Spinal Cord. He was classified as an incomplete paraplegic and expected to progress to a complete. Steve's health continued to decline and it was suggested he be put on hospice care.

I was forced to quit my job as an Autism Specialist to take care of him full time. Unwilling to accept this grim diagnosis, I began researching nonsurgical treatments and was fortunate to find a very skilled Orthotist who designed a custom fit brace to lift Steve off of his lungs to allow for better respiration. This brace did its job so well that it actually realigned Steve's spine and completely freed his lungs, thereby stabilizing his medical conditions. Steve was taken off of oxygen and sent to a Rehabilitation Hospital specializing in Spinal Cord Injuries. The doctors at this hospital immediately scheduled a surgical consult and in May of 2013 Steve underwent a 4 hour surgery to stabilize his spine, fusing T-1 to L-3.

Steve was sent home to a house that could not accommodate him. He and I were living off of his small social security check, and with no money coming in we had no way of making needed modifications to our home. The biggest obstacle was the bathroom. Although Steve was now capable of being mobile, he was forced to take baths and complete his bowel program in bed. The shower was too small and had a step up while the commode was located very close to a wall, making it impossible to transfer from a wheelchair. Steve found the Joseph Groh Foundation while searching the internet in hopes of finding relief. I contacted the foundation for help and was thrilled when we were selected as recipients. Due to water damage, the bathroom needed some repair before remodeling could even begin. With the help of family members we were able to accomplish these repairs. Joe Groh contacted David Moore of Moore & More Plumbing, a Service Roundtable member who graciously agreed to take on the project.

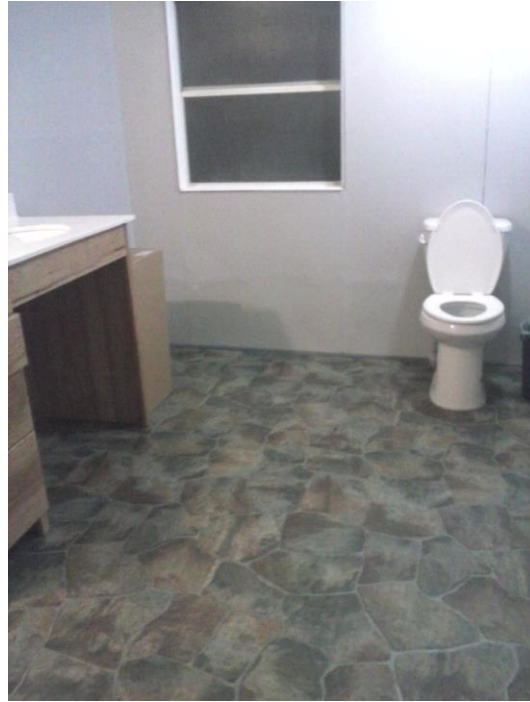
David installed a huge roll in shower and a new, more functional commode. It was moved away from the wall, allowing access for Steve to transfer from his wheelchair. David also built a custom cabinet which allows Steve to roll his wheelchair underneath, thereby accessing the new sink and countertops. In Oct of 2012, Steve had his first shower in 4 months! He stayed in the shower until all of the hot water was gone! As a direct result of Steve's new found independence in the bathroom, I was able to return to work. With money now coming in, we are able to continue the additional modifications of our home. The gift the foundation gave us is far more than a hot shower and access. They have given us our independence back and allowed me to return to work, something most people take for granted. We will be forever grateful!



***Tub and Commode Prior to Remodel***



***New Roll in Shower***



***New Commode & Roll under Sink***